

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER PRESENTS SPECIAL EVENTS AND EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Philadelphia, PA (January 3, 2008) – In celebration of Black History Month, visitors to the National Constitution Center in February can learn about the influence of African Americans in our nation's history during special events and through the Center's interactive permanent exhibition, *The Story of We the People*. Guests will have the opportunity to pay tribute to inspirational African Americans from the past, while honoring those who will continue to make history well into the future.

The schedule of special events is as follows:

Famous Firsts Show

Monday, January 21 through Friday, February 29
FREE with regular museum admission

Visitors will take a close look at Thurgood Marshall, Bessie Coleman, Jackie Robinson, and other extraordinary African Americans throughout history during this interactive show. Guests will learn about the issues they faced and the rights they gained for all African Americans, and even have the chance to experience some "famous firsts" for themselves. Participants can also test their knowledge of African American history by answering trivia questions on the giant National Constitution Center game board, where they serve as life-size game pieces. Times may vary, so visitors should check the Center's daily programs sheet for the schedule.

Decoding the Document

Monday, January 21 through Friday, February 29
FREE with regular museum admission

Visitors will have the chance to take a closer look at the Center's rare printing of the Emancipation Proclamation to learn more about its history, the history of the Civil War,

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ADD ONE/BLACK HISTORY MONTH

and the background of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. Times may vary, so visitors should check the Center's daily programs sheet for the schedule.

Soul Food February

Every Friday and Saturday in February
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Visitors can stop by Delegates' Restaurant for "Soul Food February" every Friday and Saturday throughout the month from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Specials will include fried flounder and chicken, barbecue ribs, collard greens, candied yams, sweet potato pie, and more.

The Legacy of 1808 Series

On January 1, 1808, the United States Congress prohibited the importation of slaves to America as allowed by Article 1, Section 9 of the United States Constitution. To mark the 200th anniversary of this historic legislation, the National Constitution Center is launching the **Legacy of 1808** speaker series to engage local and national experts in a year long dialogue about the history of the slave trade and its contemporary relevance.

By exploring issues of race, segregation, suffrage, and individual rights, the Center's forums will reveal how slavery cast a dark shadow over the nation's founding and influenced the evolution of American culture and society.

The Legacy of 1808: A Historical Perspective

Monday, February 11, 6:30 p.m.
FREE

The National Constitution Center welcomes 2008 visiting scholar **Martha S. Jones**, assistant professor in the department of History and Center for Afro-American and African Studies at the University of Michigan; **Howard Ohline**, Associate Professor of History at Temple University; and moderator **Stephanie McCurry**, Merriam Associate Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, for a conversation about the political and cultural climate surrounding the issue of slavery in the early days of the republic.

The Legacy of 1808: "Iron Ladies of Liberia"

Wednesday, February 20, 6:30 p.m.
FREE; through January 15, reservations are available to National Constitution Center members only

The National Constitution Center and The Independent Television Series present the Philadelphia premiere of "Iron Ladies of Liberia," an intimate documentary that goes behind the scenes with Africa's first freely elected female head of state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia. A discussion about Liberia, its historical connection to the United States, and its current policy to prevent a descent into civil war will immediately follow the screening.

The Legacy of 1808: The Emancipation Proclamation Defined

Tuesday, February 26, 6:30 p.m.
FREE

ADD TWO/BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The Emancipation Proclamation is considered the most important document of arguably one of the greatest presidents in U.S. history. After the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation is considered the next most significant national treasure. What has established this document in the public memory? What is its influence and impact upon African Americans and all Americans? Harold Holzer, one of the country's leading authorities on Lincoln, and Robert F. Engs, Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, will help answer these questions by presenting two unique perspectives on this iconic document. Matthew Pinsker, the Pohanka Chair in American Civil War History and Associate Professor of History at Dickinson College, will moderate.

In addition to these programs, the Center has highlighted artifacts and sections throughout the main exhibition to draw visitors' attention to events and time periods related to African Americans in history how they fought to become recognized as an integral part of "We the People."

One of the most remarkable artifacts on display is a rare printing of the Emancipation Proclamation, signed by Abraham Lincoln. A touchstone of our constitutional story, the Emancipation Proclamation was one of the most important presidential acts in American history, which set our nation on a true course toward the realization of our founding ideals.

Other highlighted artifacts on display include a copy of the first printing of the Dred Scott Decision from 1857, slave shackles and a key from the 1820s, John Lewis' pen used to sign the Voting Rights Act, a button from the March on Washington, an NAACP Voters Guide and Poster from 1965, and a poll tax receipt from Travis County, Texas.

Guests can also learn about African Americans' impact on the Constitution in the "American National Tree", which highlights 100 people who have helped shape the Constitution over the last 200 years. The Tree includes information about influential African Americans such as Rosa Parks, Muhammad Ali, Jackie Robinson, Barbara Jordan, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, and Elizabeth Eckford.

Visitors can examine the exhibit panels on the Dred Scott Decision, the Emancipation Proclamation, voting rights, and the 1960s Civil Rights movement, which includes pertinent details about the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the March on Washington, and the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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ADD THREE/BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The exhibit also explores Reconstruction and the subsequent amendments to the Constitution: the 13th, abolishing slavery; the 14th, providing equal protection of the law; and the 15th, guaranteeing all citizens the right to vote.

The National Constitution Center will also be hosting *Baseball As America* from The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York from February 15 through May 11, 2008. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn more about the Negro Leagues and baseball greats such as Jackie Robinson, whose 1956 Brooklyn Dodgers jersey is on display.

Guests can also travel back in time for a glimpse at the baseball world of the 1930s when they meet captivating columnist Randy Dixon in a special theatrical performance held on Saturdays and Sundays inside the exhibit between 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Dixon, who made the most of his typewriter as the key sports source for readers of *The Philadelphia Tribune* in the 1930s, can be seen hard at work as he covers Negro League superstars Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige.

Admission to *Baseball As America* is \$15 for adults, \$14 for seniors ages 65 and up, and \$9 for children ages 4-12. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available. Admission to the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, including the award-winning theater production "Freedom Rising", is included. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive,

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ADD FOUR/BLACK HISTORY MONTH

multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, “Freedom Rising”. The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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